



Camilo and the Construction of the Novel

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Abstract - From his very first novels, CamiloCasteloBranco sought to establish secure codes which, though appearing to subvert implicit rules, were in fact meant to safeguard the legitimacy of his narrative discourse while at the same time giving the impression of engaging readers in light conversation. Thus, the opposition at play between what is true and what appears to be true, as well as between the forced linearity of reading and discursive transgression take on a relevant role in the work of the author from Seide. This tension promotes the construction of novels that constantly seem to question the validity of the diegetic level when compared to the principles revealed in para texts or within the plot. Camilian discourse is thus ironically structured around a continuous ambiguity between saying and doing, while its ingredients unequivocally direct the reader towards the interests of the narrative. Aníbal Pinto de Castro (1976: 47) had already stressed that this process of manipulation and the consequent excess of justification are indeed common in CamiloCasteloBranco's narrative and they create an ironic overtone which is hard to ignore. When Camilo makes explicit reference to narrative construction processes, he is implicitly alluding to cultural codes that readers are supposed to know and which they will easily identify. Readers are thus in a position to better understand the 'game' they are being invited to play and which works in two ways: while seemingly legitimizing narrative freedom, it actually reveals observance of the canon.

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I. INTRODUCTION

From his very first novels, CamiloCasteloBranco sought to establish secure codes which, though appearing to subvert implicit rules, were in fact meant to safeguard the legitimacy of his narrative discourse while at the same time giving the impression of engaging readers in light conversation. Thus, the opposition at play between what is true and what appears to be true, as well as between the forced linearity of reading and discursive transgression take on a relevant role in the work of the author from Seide. This tension promotes the construction of novels that constantly seem to question the validity of the diegetic level when compared to the principles revealed in para texts or within the plot. Camilian discourse is thus ironically structured around a continuous ambiguity between saying and doing, while its ingredients unequivocally direct the reader towards the interests of the narrative. Aníbal Pinto de Castro (1976: 47) had already stressed that this process of manipulation and the consequent excess of justification are indeed common in CamiloCasteloBranco's narrative and they create an ironic overtone which is hard to ignore. When Camilo makes explicit reference to narrative construction processes, he is implicitly alluding to cultural codes that readers are supposed to know and which they will easily identify. Readers are thus in a position to better understand the 'game' they are being invited to play and which works in two ways: while seemingly legitimizing narrative freedom, it actually reveals observance of the canon. If we consider irony to be an essential criterion for understanding discourse and all its senses (Ferraz, 1987: 34), it is easy to recognize that we can only attain the real meaning of a text by decoding its underlying data, i.e., all the implications echoing in it (Hamon, 1996: 25). This is a fascinating process, as we shall attempt to demonstrate below. By attributing a major role to ironic references and thus 'institutionalizing' the rupture (Ferraz, 1987: 54) with tacit knowledge, the narrator in Camilian novels seeks to distance himself from his own discourse (Ferraz, 1987: 42). Posing as an editor or mere organizer of other people's texts, which he claims to have come across by chance (Ferraz, 1987: 65-66), the narrator uses artifices that effectively promote this distance. The change from an apparently serious and neutral register (narrating what others have written or recounted) (Ferraz, 1987: 70 and 129) to an

ironic and engaging one helps the author project himself onto the narrative scene through comments, assertions and position statements (Ferraz, 1987: 75). The sum of these constitutes a narrative level that is just as fascinating as the level of the plot and characters.

The following review of some of CamiloCasteloBranco's novels shows that the meta language employed should be given two distinct interpretations: a literal, flawed and imperfect one; and an ironic one, which plays with the implied canons and reveals the differences between what is written and what is actually practised.

Camilo's first novel, *Anátema* (Anathema) (1851), shares many of the features of serial fiction (astounding action and an uninterrupted succession of exciting events) with *Mistérios de Lisboa* (Mysteries of Lisbon) (1854) and *Livro Negro de Padre Dinis* (Black Book of Father Dennis) (1855). Note that the very first line of *Anatema* appeals to the implied knowledge of an audience who is used to reading novels. The opening line, "Este começaporondeacabamos outros" ["This starts where others end"]¹ (CasteloBranco, 2003: 29), followed by the narration of the marriage between two of the characters, implies that the reader is well of aware of the fact that marriage is a novel's usual finale. However, this simple statement is all but naive, as the underlying irony has much deeper implications than what is explicitly declared and thus directs the readers' attention towards other aspects and characters. The canon, which experienced readers cannot forget, makes them move away from the focus of attention and results in an opposite reading of the initial sentence. An identical phenomenon happens in the chapter "Prevenções" (Preventions) in *Mistérios de Lisboa*, when the narrator gives a definition of 'novel', states that the book does not belong to that category, and then proceeds to hint that he is merely complying with the topic of truthfulness, so dear to the Romantics. The perversity of the artifice intensifies the irony of those assertions and makes it easier to read between the lines:

Tentar fazer um romance é um desejo inocente. Baptizá-lo com um título pomposo é um pretexto ridículo. Apanhar uma nomenclatura, estafada e velha, insculpi-la no frontispício de um livro, e ficar orgulhoso de ter um padrinho original,

¹ The vast majority of CamiloCasteloBranco's novels have not been translated into English. Myfairly literal translations of the excerpts quoted in this paper are simply meant to function as "windows" onto the original.

isso, meus caros leitores, é uma patranha de que eu não sou capaz. (...)

Antes eu gostava muito de ter nascido na terra dos homens verdadeiros, porque, peço me acreditem, que os romances são uma enfiada de mentiras (...)

Não senhor. Este romance não é um romance: é um diário de sofrimentos, verídico, autêntico e justificado. (Castelo Branco, 1969b: 1st vol.31-32)

[Trying to write a novel is an innocent wish. Baptising it with a pompous title is a ridiculous pretext. Taking an old and decrepit name and engraving it in the frontispiece of a book, and then feeling pride in having an original godfather, all this, my dear readers, is a trick I am not capable of. (...)]

I would rather have been born in a land of truthful men, because, I beg you to believe me, novels are a string of lies. (...)

No Sir. This novel is not a novel: it is a diary of suffering; truthful, authentic and justified.]

The same happens when, in "Advertência" (Warning)(the section preceding Chapter I in *Livro Negro de Padre Dinis*), we read that "O Livro Negro não foi escrito para ser publicado em forma alguma, e muito menos em forma de romance." (Castelo Branco, 1969b: 1st vol.5) [The *Black Book* was not written to be published in any form whatsoever, much less in the form of a novel]

Various codes are alluded to in these lines, from the superficial rejection of story-telling to the conventional definition of 'novel'. The author/narrator assumes that the readers (or narratees) have the necessary knowledge that will make them believe in the narrator's artifices. This is the only way we can accept that, in *O Romance de um Homem Rico* (The Romance of a Rich Man), the narrator finds the crucial ingredients to capture the reader's attention, thus establishing a sort of fundamental rules, without which there could be no novel worthy of that name:

O tocante era ir ela nos braços das esposas do Senhor para cima, e ele ficar cá fora, se não sem sentidos, ao menos declamando um quarto de hora, cair afinal extenuado nos braços dos amigos. Isso sim, era uma passagem que bastava à reputação da novela, e a venderem-se mais alguns milhares de volumes. Escrever as cousas como elas se passam no mundo, como não as vemos por aí! Então é melhor não dar cópias da realidade. (...) O romance (...) Se não nos maravilha, enfada-nos. (Castelo Branco, 1984b: 3rd vol.85).

[It was touching to see her go up in the arms of the Lord's brides, whilst he remained out there, not exactly unconscious, but declaiming for a quarter of an hour until he fell in his friends' arms at last. That passage in the novel was indeed enough to make its reputation and to sell some more thousands of copies. Writing about things as they actually happen in the word, not as we see them! So it is best not make a copy of reality. (...) The novel (...), if it does not surprise us, bores us.]

The beginning of *O Que Fazem as Mulheres* (What Women Do) should be read along the same lines:

É uma história que faz arrepiar os cabelos.

Há aqui bacamartes e pistolas, lágrimas e sangue, gemidos e berros, anjos e demónios.

É um arsenal, uma sarrabulhada, e um dia de juízo! Isto sim que é romance. (Castelo Branco, 1967c: 15)

[This is a story that makes your hair stand on end.

There are blunderbusses and pistols, blood and tears, whining and screaming, angels and demons.

It is an armoury, it is turmoil and doomsday!

This is what a novel should be like.]

The same is also true of the following paragraph, from *Um Homem de Brios* (A Man of Pride): "(...) o romance, que visar à exactidão dos costumes, é frio, e não pode acabar bem. Romance sem sarrabulho é coisa triste como o dezembro em casa do lavrador que não matou cevado." (Castelo Branco, 1967a: 8) [(...) a novel which seeks to accurately portray customs is cold and cannot have a happy ending. A novel without turmoil is as sad as the month of December in the home of a farmer who has not killed his porkers.]

The concept of novel emerging from all these assertions seems to be more in line with serial fiction than with the romance, of which *O Amor de Perdição* (Doomed Love) is the perfect example. However, some distinctions can already be detected in the three definitions quoted above. The second and third definitions (from 1858 and 1856 respectively) refer to works of fiction whose intricate plots are based upon a succession of adventurous incidents. The first, although still recognizing the importance of extraordinary events, accepts the role played by all-consuming passions and rampant feelings rather than by continuous and surprising actions.

Camilodoes not only define 'the novel' but also takes great care to show what a novel must not be, although he may in fact practise the opposite of what he preaches in the course of the same novel. In *Cenas da Foz* (Scenes from Foz), the narrator-character writes: "Eu, João Júnior, não sofro os romancistas que pulam de um capítulo para outro, de modo que o romance tanto faz principiá-lo de trás para diante como de diante

para trás.” (CasteloBranco, 1983: 794). [I, JoãoJúnior, cannot stand the novelists who jump aimlessly from one chapter to another in such a way that it makes no difference to start reading the novel from the end or from beginning.]

It is obvious that this mutability of scenes does not seem easy in nineteenth-century fiction, especially since the plot required coherence, linearity and a clear sequencing of events. Nevertheless, in *O Que Fazem Mulheres* (What Women Do), before Chapter land after two chapters entitled “A TodososqueLerem” (To all readers) and “A Alguns dos queLerem” (To Some Readers), there is a chapter called “CapítuloAvulso” (Loose Chapter), whose subtitle is “Para sercolocadoonde o leitorquiser” (To be placed where the reader wishes). This chapter introduces a character who could in fact be introduced somewhere else in the novel. There is indeed a certain irony in the apparent freedom with which the narrator manipulates discourse so as to convey a desired piece of information at a specific moment in the diegesis. This demonstrates a total mastery of narrative techniques, as evidenced in a paragraph taken from the conclusion of the same novel, which describes the clichés that appear in works of the same genre:

O leitor já sabe como no teatro se recupera o juízo. Se a mulher é doida, rigorosamente desgrenhada, esfrega os olhos, atira com as madeixas para trás, e dá fricções secas às fontes com frenesi; se, homem, abre a boca, espanta os olhos, soleva o peito em arquejantes haustos, despede o grito agudo obrigado a ambos os sexos, e está pessoa de juízo, capaz de casar, que é quase sempre a pior das doidices em que os autores fazem cair os seus doidos, restaurados para a razão. (CasteloBranco, 1967c: 188-189).

[The reader already knows how theatrical characters come to their senses. Crazy, dishevelled women rub their eyes, throw their hair back, and stroke their temples in a frenzy; men gape, open their eyes wide, heave their chests and let out the piercing cry which is obligatory for both sexes; and suddenly they're sane and discerning persons, ready for marriage, which is almost always the worst of all the crazy actions writers force their crazy characters into, when these have been restored to sanity.]

The presence of stereotypes leads to sentences such as “Osteus romances do meioemdianteadivinham-se” (CasteloBranco, 1967c: 143) [Your novels are predictable from their middle to the end], which allude to the predictability arising from the lack of the surprise factor or unusual action. It is evident that all these statements must be put into perspective, insofar as the theory of the novel which is implicitly taking shape ends

up being inoperative and incoherent. In the end, the confrontation between theory and practice only leads to doubt, and the narrator, in Guimarães Rosa's words, always tells “mentiraporverdade” (Rosa, 1972: 35) [lies instead of truth]. Thus, what is presented as legitimate is generally what should be understood as ironic. The fictitious hesitation between what is and what is not a novel also applies to Camilo's historical fiction as well as to his various assertions about the plausibility of his texts. In the prologue to *Luta de Gigantes* (Fight of Giants), one can read: “Não lhe chamo romance, porque é história autenticada por documentos; não lhe chamo história, porque seria presunção imprópria da minha humildade aforar-me em fidalguias tamanhas.” (CasteloBranco, 1990: 799) [I don't call it novel, because the story is based on authentic documents; I don't call it history, because it would be too presumptuous on my part to arrogate the right to such a noble achievement.] We know that it is frequently difficult to include Camilo's fiction in the sub-genre known as historical novel, as he is incapable of giving a rigorously accurate account of the events and incidents that he wants to explore to secure his readers' interest in the plot. His historical novels are mainly Camilian novels (Marinho, 1999), in which historical characters coexist with fictitious ones in carefully crafted environments, where they accomplish feats that cannot be historically verified.

The notion of novel that has been outlined above, albeit ironic and controversial, is still the one that prevails in the ‘Foreword’ to the second edition of *Amor de Perdição*, which appeared in 1863, one year after the first edition. In this text, Camilo considers the reasons for his novel's success, and predicts how this success will evolve over time:

Este livro, cujo êxito se me antolhava mau, quando eu o ia escrevendo, teve uma recepção de primazia sobre todos os seus irmãos. Movia-me à desconfiança ser ele triste, sem interpolação de risos, sombrio, e rematado por catástrofe de confranger o ânimo dos leitores, que se interessam na boa sorte de uns, e no castigo de outros personagens. (...)

É grande parte neste favorável, embora insustentável juízo, a rapidez das peripécias, a derivação concisa do diálogo para os pontos essenciais do enredo, ausência de divagações filosóficas, a lhanza da linguagem e desartifício das locuções. (...)

Estou quase convencido de que o romance, tendendo a apelar da iníqua sentença que o condena a fulgir e apagar-se, tem de firmar sua duração em alguma espécie de utilidade, tal como o estudo da alma, ou a pureza do dizer. (CasteloBranco, undated a:10-11).

[This book, which I expected to be scarcely successful when I was writing it, was in fact much more fortunate than its fellows. My expectation was based on the fact that it is a sad book, with no laughter, sombre and filled with tragedies that undermine the morale of the readers, who are interested in the good fortune of some characters and in the punishment of others. (...)]

The readers' favourable reception is in great part due to fast-paced adventures, concise dialogues at crucial moments in the plot, absence of philosophical musings, simplicity of the language and linearity of the sentences. (...)

I am almost convinced that the novel, trying to escape the cruel fate that condemns it to glow and die out, has to derive its longevity from a measure of usefulness, such as the study of the soul, or the pureness of language.]

The latter assertion seems to find an echo at the beginning of chapter two of *Amor de Salvação* (Love of Salvation), which was published the following year, 1864. Here the narrator mentions serious writing, predicting that it would not be very popular:

Escritor sério! Quando se agarra a fama pelas orelhas, e a gente a obriga a dar pregão da nossa seriedade de escritor, a glória vai procurar os nossos livros sérios às estantes dos livreiros, e lá se fica a conversar delícias com as brochuras imóveis, enquanto a traça não dá neles e nela. (CasteloBranco, undated b: 27).

[*Serious writer!* When we take fame by the horns and force it to proclaim we are serious writers, glory looks for our serious books on the booksellers' shelves, and there it stops to make pleasant conversation with the immobile volumes until bookworms bore away at them and at it.]

The frequent contrast between the proffered principles and the proposed plots makes the comparison between assertions and their underlying meaning even more enticing. When, in the 1870s, Camilo was compelled to adopt new aesthetic models, he did so, once again, in an ironic manner, in the preface to both the fifth edition of *O Amor de Perdição*, dating 1879, and the second edition of *Eusébio Macário*, as well as in the section called "Advertência" (Warning), in the same novel. In the first novel, the author declares that he is against the novel he published seventeen years earlier:

O Amor de Perdição, visto à luz eléctrica do criticismo moderno, é um romance romântico, declamatório, com bastantes aleijões líricos, e umas ideias celeradas que chegam a tocar no desaforo do sentimentalismo. (...) O bom senso

público relê isto, compara com aquilo, e vinga-se barrufando com frouxos de riso realista as páginas que há dez anos alijarava com lágrimas românticas. (CasteloBranco, undated a: 113-114).

[*Doomed Love*, examined under the electric light of modern criticism, is a romantic and declamatory novel, filled with lyrical afflictions and some atrocious ideas that border on sentimental arrogance. (...) Sensible readers re-read this novel, compare it with that, and take revenge by sprinkling with realistic laughs the same pages they would sprinkle with their romantic tears ten years ago.]

The obvious irony of this passage is matched in the preface to the second edition of *Eusébio Macário*, when Camilo makes a friend say the following:

(...) tens de pôr a fisiologia onde os românticos punham a sentimentalidade: derivar a moral das bossas, e subordinar à fatalidade o que, pelos velhos processos, se imputava à educação e à responsabilidade.

[(...) you have to use physiology where the Romantics used sentimentality; you have to derive morals from blows and ascribe to fatality that which used to be regarded, in the old days, as the result of education and responsibility.]

Hethengoeson to remark: "Compreendi, e achei que eu, há vinte e cinco anos, já assim pensava, quando Balzac tinha em mim o mais inábil e ordinário dos seus discípulos." (CasteloBranco, 1958: XII) [I understood, and I concluded that I used to think in such a fashion twenty-five years ago, when I was one of the most unskilled and most ordinary of Balzac's disciples.]

This change in the narrative construction corresponds to an alteration in the aesthetic canon, though this does not actually imply a radical transformation. In fact, on a deep structural level, the metaliterary process has not changed much since the first novels and the ironic problematisation of the structuring and conception of the novel remains.

After having analysed the passages that make generic allusions to the narrative process, it is now time to concentrate on Camilo's specific references to style. In the introduction to *Anátema*, the author characterizes the so-called historical novel as "uma ginástica de contorções dificultosas de estilo, opulenta de pontinhos, e *ahs!* e *ohs!*" (CasteloBranco, 2003: 25) [a set of difficult contortions of style, studded with suspension points and *ahs!* and *ohs!*], and says that for the common people, this type of novel should be "quimérico, híbrido e mentiroso" [chimeric, hybrid and filled with lies] (CasteloBranco, 2003: 27). In doing so, he wants to move away from a far too restrictive school and declare his independence, even though the reader feels that his novels contain some of the very elements

which he claims to be rejecting. This is what happens in *Cenas da Foz*, when he inveighs against serial novelists:

- Folhetinistas! Que são folhetinistas?
- Folhetinistas são uns pataratas que não-de vir daqui a vinte anos, trazidos em uma nuvem de gazetas.» (CasteloBranco, 1983: 767)

[- Serial novelists! What are serial novelists?

Serial novelists are fools who will return in twenty years, born by a cloud of gazettes.]

The irony in the lines quoted above suggests the ever present ambiguity in Camilian novels, as can also be inferred from the following excerpt from “Na segundaedição” (In the second edition), added to *Doze CasamentosFelizes* (Twelve Happy Marriages):

Cuidou o autor que este livro, à conta da sua muita simpleza e naturalidade, desagradaria ao máximo número de pessoas, que aferem, ou dantes aferiam o quilate de uma obra de fantasia, consoante os lances surpreendentes e extraordinários. Não foi assim. A época é outra, e melhor. O maravilhoso teve sua voga, seu tempo, e sua catástrofe.(CasteloBranco, 1969a: 25).

[The author took great care that this book, due to its great simplicity and naturalness, would displease the largest number of people, who judge, or used to judge, a work of the imagination on the basis of its surprising and extraordinary adventures. But that did not happen. We now live in a different and better age. The marvellous has had its vogue, its moment of glory, and its end.]

So what are the necessary ingredients for a novel? In chapter V of *ViagensnaMinha Terra* (Travels in my Homeland), Garrett provides a sort of recipe, which ironically lists all the clichés of a much too conventional canon:

Todo o drama e todo o romance precisa de:
Uma ou duas damas, mais ou menos ingênuas,
Um pai, - nobre ou ignóbil,
Dois ou três filhos, de dezanove a trinta anos,
Um criado velho,
Um monstro encarregado de fazer as maldades,

Vários tratantes, e algumas pessoas capazes para intermédios e centros.

Ora bem; vai-se aos figurinos de Dumas, de Eug. Sue, de Victor Hugo, e recorta a gente de cada um deles, as figuras que precisa, (...) Depois vai-se às crônicas, tiram-se uns poucos de nomes e de palavrões velhos; (...) E aqui está como nós fazemos a nossa literatura original. (Garrett, 2004: 95-96).

[All dramas and novels must include:

One or two more or less ingenuous damsels,

A noble or ignoble father,

Two or three children, aged from nineteen to thirty,

An old servant,

A monster whose function is to do evil deeds,

Various carers, and some able people to act as intermediaries and centres.

So, you take Dumas', Eugene Sue's, or Victor Hugo's characters and cut out the ones you need (...) Then you take the chronicles and find some old names and words; (...) and that's how we make our original literature.]

In chapter fourteen of *Anátoma*, Camilo reveals a very similar attitude when he blames himself for not having used the essential ingredients for a good novel:

(...) o certo é que aí está o romance, mais de meio do seu primeiro volume, sem nos falar de uma tremenda sova de pau, como é de uso lá por cima; ou de duas punhaladas, em noite de cerração, atraíoadas no medonho de sombria viela; ou, ao menos, e para maior realce do copista, se, no embrulho destas ensossas filosofias, tivéssemos uma vista de cárcere, com o seu preso pálido e arrepiado, (...) (CasteloBranco, 2003: 149-150)

[the fact is that here is the novel, more than half way into the first volume, but it does not tell about terrible beatings, which is the custom of the north; or about treacherous stabbings in some murky alley in the dark of night; it could at least highlight the writer in the midst of all these dull musings, and afford us a view of a prison cell with a pale and terrified inmate, (...)]

Despite all these often conflicting justifications, which are not always consonant with the plot, Camilo wants to find, in fiction, a more attractive view than life itself, a view that makes for an easy escape into ideal worlds (Castro, 1994: 65). However, and according to what had already been revealed in *Mistérios de Lisboa*, his insistence on asserting the truthfulness of what is reported leads him to deny the novel any credibility at the same time as he reiterates that it belongs to the universe of the real, as can be seen in the following excerpts: “Se háverdadesobre a terra é o romance, queeutenho a honra de ofereceràsvoossashoras de desenfado.”(*A Filha do Arcediago* - The Archdeacon's Daughter, CasteloBranco, 1971b: 5); [If there is truth in this world, then that truth is the novel, which I have the honour of presenting to you for your beguilement.]

Eu desejo escrever o romance de modo que o meu leitor – se Deus me deparar um com experiência do mundo, e alma capaz de criar, pela reminiscência de ilusões extintas, novas ilusões – possa dizer: “a vida é isto...” (Um Homem de Brios - A Man of Pride, Castelo Branco, 1967a: 9)

[I wish to write novels in such a way that my readers – God willing, readers with knowledge of the world and able to create new illusions by reminiscing about past illusions – will be able to say: “this is life”...]

A greater complexity can be found in Camilo's play with truth and verisimilitude, where he defends himself from possible detractors and safeguards fiction, albeit indirectly. In *Doze Casamentos Felizes* (Twelve Happy Marriages), the narrator asserts that “Há verdades inverosímeis” [There are untruthful truths] (Castelo Branco, 1969a: 260), and in *O Retrato de Ricardina* (The Portrait of Ricardina) that “seria melhor inventá-las [as coisas] para saírem mais verosímeis do que as verdadeiras.” (Castelo Branco, 1971d: 7) [it would be better to invent (things) so they would appear more real than the real ones]. In *A Doida do Candal* (The Madwoman from Candal) and *O Que Fazem Mulheres* (What Women Do), the narrator suggests that his plots are highly probable:

- Todas as histórias dos meus romances são verdadeiras, minha senhora – respondi eu. – Uns casos aconteceram, outros podiam acontecer; e logo que podiam, é quase evidente que aconteceram; porque as dores não se inventam: ou se experimentam ou se adivinham. (Castelo Branco, 1971a: 276)

[“All the stories in my novels are true,” I replied. “Some of them happened, others could happen and, since they could happen, it is almost certain that they did; because you cannot invent pain: you either experience it or foresee it.”]

(...) o bom siso dos consumidores escolhe o romance verosímil, amalgamado com arte e discernimento, escrito de modo que seja o reflexo da sociedade, e que possa de per si reflectir também na sociedade, amoldurando-se nas formas costumeiras e exequíveis. (Castelo Branco, 1967c: 143).

[“(...) consumers with good judgement choose verisimilar novels, interspersed with art and discernment, written to be a reflection of society as well as to reflect upon society, and moulded into customary and workable forms.]

The notion of verisimilitude also implies a certain degree of manipulation, which again causes ambiguity and, as a consequence, doubt. In “Dedicatória à Espécie Humana, Inclusive os Barões” (Dedication to the Human Species, Including Barons) from *Cenas da Foz*, we read: “O romance, Senhora, é a mais profícua das farmácias, porque neste laboratório douram-se as pílulas com maravilhosa limpeza.” (Castelo Branco, 1983: 762) [The novel, Madam, is the most efficient pharmacy, because in its laboratory pills are coated golden with remarkable care.]

True, false, verisimilar, or fantastic, the novel carries in its core the very problems it wishes to raise, thus legitimizing the inclusion of characters that the narrator may want to justify, exempt from blame, comment on or simply ridicule (Castro, 1994: 67). For instance, in *Mistérios de Lisboa*, the narrator observes that Pedro da Silva “disliked Radcliffe” (Castelo Branco, 1969b: 3rd vol., 82). Later on in the novel, this remark allows him to take full advantage from a passage in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolfo* to highlight the Romantic stereotype:

Abriu a janela para refrigerar a cabeça afogueada, e não pôde retirar os olhos do vulto escuro do castelo de Cliton, onde naquele instante a imaginação lhe desceu o crepe que Emília vira no castelo de Udolfo. (Castelo Branco, 1969b: 3rd vol., 127).

[She opened the window to cool her flushed cheeks and could not take her eyes off the dark shadow of Cliton's castle when, at that very moment, her imagination saw the curtain being drawn as Emilia had seen in Udolfo's castle.]

These literary reminiscences, which also appear in other novels with reference to other authors, seem to function as an echo of their social and literary role. In *Onde Está a Felicidade?* (Where is Happiness?), Guilherme do Amaral is described as a “vítima dos romances” [victim of the novel] because he “leu de dia e de noite, decorou páginas, que lhe eletrizaram o coração combustível, afeioou-se aos caracteres do *grosso terror*, (...)” (Castelo Branco, 1965: 46) [he read day and night, memorized pages which electrified his inflammable heart, and took to the characters of *great terror* (...)]. In *Memórias de Guilherme do Amaral* (Memories of Guilherme do Amaral), the same idea emerges in the following passage: “Aqui tens tu um desgraçado que a leitura desencaminhou do plácido e seguro itinerário que seus ignorantes avós tinham trilhado do berço à sepultura.” (Castelo Branco, 1966a: 39) [Here's a wretched soul who has been diverted by the act reading from the security of the well-worn path which his ignorant grandparents had trodden from the cradle to the grave.]

The excerpts quoted above emphasise the potentially illeffects of the novel, in line with Rousseau's side as in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, where he observes that, “Il doit déplaire aux dévots, aux libertins, aux philosophes; il doit choquer les femmes galantes et scandaliser les honnêtes femmes.” (Rousseau, 1854: 1) [(The novel) should displease devotees, libertines, philosophers; it should shock courageous women and scandalize honest ones] and that “jamais fille chaste n'a lu de romans, et j'ai mis à celui-ci un titre assez décidé pour qu'en l'ouvrant on sût à quoi s'en tenir. Celle qui, malgré ce titre, en osera lire une seule page, est une fille perdue. (Rousseau, 1854: 2) [No innocent girl has ever

read a novel, and I gave this novel a title so revealing that, on opening this book, one knows what to expect. She who, despite this title, dares to read one single page, is a wanton girl.]

The notion that the novel is 'corrosive' becomes more widespread in Romanticism, insofar as the Romantic aesthetics constantly challenges the norm by focusing on rupture and difference (Ferraz, 1987: 36). In fact, we know that CamiloCasteloBranco's reflections occur at a moment in culture which favoured a sort of pedagogy of taste and education of the reader (Reis 1994:109); we also know that the author of *Amor de Perdição* often enjoys saying the opposite of what he actually intends to say, in the conviction that reading should be a cultural practice accompanied by a narrative-building practice (Reis 1994:117). Nonetheless, Camilo's references to the power of the novel should not be underestimated, even if we perceive that they are often ironic and open to different interpretations.

In the chapter entitled "Warning", in *Livro Negro de Padre Dinis*, Camilo alludes to the reader's expectations and ends up offering a kind of definition of what he understands to be his public's taste. At the same time, however, he caricatures that taste in *Vinte Horas de Liteira* (Twenty Hours in a Litter), thus revealing the contradiction inherent in the universe of fiction. In the first novel quoted above, the reader is told: "Quereis um romance; não quereis uma elegia. É preciso dar-vos um romance; uma biografia, uma história em capítulos; um enredo interessante de peripécias. E tendes razão." (CasteloBranco, 1971c: 1st vol., 9) [You want a novel; you do not want an elegy. So you should be given a novel; a biography, a story in chapters; an interesting plot filled with adventures. And you are right.] In the second book, one character describes the novel indirectly, through its negative influence:

Sabes que eu leio os teus romances (...) Já fizeste chorar minha mulher: quase que me ias fazendo nervosa! Foi-me preciso dizer-lhe que tu mentias como dois ministérios, e que timbravas em ter um estilo de cebola ou de mostarda de sinapismos que faz rebentar chafarizes de pranto. Nem assim consegui desacreditar-te! Assim que sai romance teu, minha mulher, combinada com o editor, seca-me a paciência, até que o livro chega de Braga entre um papeliço de açúcar, e o saco do arroz. A pobre mulher começa a chorar no título; estreita-se a ler; e, ao outro dia, está desolhada, e amarela como as doze mulheres físicas, que tens levado à sepultura num rio de lágrimas. Tens romances, meu amigo, que mentem desde o título. (Castelo Branco, 1966b: 48-49)

[You know I read your novels (...) You've already made my wife cry, and you have almost led her to insanity! I had to tell her that you were lying

through your teeth, and that you insisted on using a style which, like onion or mustard plaster, makes readers burst into fountains of tears. Even so, I did not manage to discredit you! As soon as one of your novels is published, my wife, in collusion with the publisher, taxes my patience until the book arrives from Braga along with a packet of sugar and a bag of rice. The poor woman starts crying when she reads the title and goes on reading into the late hours of the night; then, the following day, she looks worn and pallid like the twelve women suffering from consumption which you have driven to the grave in a river of tears. There are novels, my friend, which lie from their very title.]

The artifice that leads the author to provide commentaries on his own novels creates the internal parody of discourse on itself, which, besides being a sign of great modernity, causes self-reflection and, paradoxically, results in the author practising the processes he denies.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the first sentence in the first chapter of *Onde Está a Felicidade?* (Where is Happiness?) reads, "Os romances fazem mal a muita gente" [Novels are bad for many people] (CasteloBranco, 1965: 45), and that the preface to *Anos de Prosa* (Years of Prose) contains lengthy considerations on the harms brought about by reading:

O mau romance tem afistulado as entranhas deste país. (...) Bendita e louvada seja a ignorância! Os romances franceses até 1830, encontraram as almas portuguesas hermeticamente calafetadas. Até esse ano infausto, a mulher era o anjo caseiro, a alma da despensa, a providência da peúga, e sobretudo a fêmea do homem (...). E, depois, o malefício do romance não está somente no plágio irrisório; o pior é quando as imaginações frívolas ou compassivas se entalham os lances da vida fantasiosa da novela, e crêem que a norma geral do viver é essa.» (CasteloBranco, 1984a: 3rd vol., 1031-1033)

[Bad novels have infected the very core of this country. (...) Blessed be ignorance! Portuguese minds were totally impermeable to French novels up to 1830. Until that unfortunate year, women were domestic angels, souls of the pantry, providential sock darners and, above all, men's help meet (...). Besides, the evil of the novel does not lie only in its unassuming plagiarism; what is worse is when frivolous or compassionate minds carve out the actions of the imaginary life of the novel, and believe that to be the life in general.]

The same idea crops up in *Coração, Cabeça e Estômago* (Heart, Head and Stomach):

Ai! Dez anos depois, a mulher do Porto já não era assim, não!

Tinha passado por elas o bafo pestilencial do romance. Liam e morriam para a verdade, e para a natureza legítima. Invejavam a palidez das pálidas, e a espiritualidade das magras. Tal menina houve que bebeu vinagre com pó de telha; e outras, mais suspirosas e avessas ao vinagre, desvelavam as noites emaciando o rosto à claridade doentia da lua. Algumas tossiam constipadas, e queriam da sua tosse catarrosa fingir a debilidade do peito, que não pode com o coração. Muitas, à força de jejuns, desmedravam a olhos vistos, e amolgavam as costelas entre as compressas d'aço do colete. (...)

Foi o romance que degenerou as raças (...)» (Castelo Branco, 1967b: 168).

[Ah! Ten years later, the women from Porto were no longer like that, not at all!

They had breathed in the putrid stench of the novel. They read and died for truth, and for legitimate nature. They envied the paleness of pale women and the spirituality of thin ones. There was even a girl who drank vinegar mixed with roof tile powder; and others, more pining and loath to drink vinegar, would stay up all night, their faces wasting away in the morbid moonlight. Some, suffering from a cold, took advantage of their chesty cough to fake a weakness of the heart. Many, given to fasting, would become thinner and thinner, their ribs bruised by the pressure of the steel boning of their corsets. (...)

It was the novel that led to the downfall of the human race. (...)"]

This purported interconnection between fiction and reality, to the point of one interfering with the other, is very curious. Camilo's caricature in fact favours a critical reading, as it highlights what is meant to be ignored and reveals the existence of strong cultural codes that can only be broken by ridicule. The chapter entitled "Cinco Páginas que é melhor não lerem" [Five pages you should not read] in *O Que Fazem Mulheres*, is a paradigmatic example of this. The scientific apparatus brought forth by the narrator serves no other purpose than to expose the novelist's intentions – the existence of false lineages, resulting from false baptism and birth certificates, which hide adulterous relationships.

Indeed the title of this chapter is much more interesting than its contents. The advice given in the title serves a necessarily opposite function, since all readers are bound to disregard its meaning and to read this chapter with even more intense curiosity. Now this is Camilo's supreme skill: saying something indisputable while meaning the exact opposite, as befits irony, and thus giving it a doubly symbolic effect. Camilo is well aware of the limitations of the novel, but he deliberately chooses to expose them to obtain the opposite effect: the foregrounding of the narrative construction and of the characters, who seem to embody the very principles they mock, by denying them.

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